

again, or at the floor, their chins in their hands. At their feet lay the newspapers, eagerly read and discarded by each and every member of this little group. There was a "noon extra," fresh from a ten o'clock press. It had been the last to fall into their hands.

They tried to smoke, but the water of mortal terror filled their mouths. The smell of dead, dank tobacco pervaded the room.

In a far corner, huddled against the wall, there was a shivering, silent figure, a Pariah even among these under-world outcasts. He sat apart from the others, denied a place in the circle, despised and abhorred by the men he once had scorned because they were the devil-may-care companions and emulators of his brother. His beady black eyes never shifted from the low, padlocked door in the opposite end of the room. He, too, was waiting for the dread news from the upper world. His breathing was sharply audible, as of one drugged by sleep; his body had not moved an inch in an hour or more, so fierce was the suspense that held him rigid. From time to time he swallowed, although his mouth was dry and empty; there was a rattling sound accompanying the act that suggested the hoarse croak of a frog. Always his gaze was on the door, never wavering, unblinking, fascinated by the horror that was creeping down to him as surely as the sun crept up to the apex of the day.

Noon! Twelve o'clock, midday! The hour they were dreading!

One of the shivering thieves beside the stove drew forth from a ragged pocket the plutocratic timepiece of a millionaire victim. The way his eyes narrowed as he looked at its face told the silent observers that it was twelve o'clock and after. Unconsciously every figure stiffened, every jaw was set, every nostril spread